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PREPARATIONS FOR THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN: ACTION FOR EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE

Statement submitted by the National Council of German Women's Organizations, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, category II

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 29 and 30 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) of 23 May 1968.

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We, the 11 million women represented by the National Council of German Women's Organizations, want our share.

We want our share of productive work. We want our share of responsibilities in civil society. We want our share of power through equal access to the decision-making processes. We want our fair share of family work.

More than half of the population are women. Our share must be at least half.

We want to share high-income job opportunities. We want the end of job segregation, which is the cause of poverty among women throughout their life cycle.

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We want a new conception of work. Work done by the individual person should lead to economic independence. But work is not only done through activities within the system of gainful employment. Work is also done through activities for the family and society, by which we mean raising children and caring for dependent family members, such as the sick, the elderly and the disabled.

Work should be redefined and redistributed for the benefit of all. This would lead to our fair share of responsibilities in the family. We offer the other half to men.

Since full participation of women in private, social, public and political life is necessary to achieve democracy and sustainable human development, measures must be taken by all sectors of society - Governments, non-governmental organizations, political parties, social partners and the media - to promote the participation of women and reach parity with men.

We want Governments first to commit themselves to the principle of gender balance in all their national and international decision-making positions, including peaceful missions of conflict prevention, management and resolution.

The commitment of Governments to this principle will lead to similar commitments on the part of political parties, private business, trade unions and employers' associations. They would undertake specific affirmative-action measures as well, such as reforms of electoral codes and the establishment of progressive minimum quotas, until equitable participation of women is assured. The mass media would play an important role in encouraging and supporting women in decision-making processes by presenting women in positive roles, showing their real and full potential. This will lead finally to gender balance.

Public awareness of the necessity and the impact of equal participation of women on the whole society must be increased. Public education campaigns and gender sensitization need to be developed and utilized at all levels of government, business and the community.

We need mechanisms and bodies to monitor implementation in these fields in cooperation with women's organizations. Governments should promote collaboration with women's organizations to establish joint monitoring procedures that will ensure the effective implementation of policies designed to eradicate inequalities. Governments should support the funding and strengthening of women's organizations and they should promote and utilize the knowledge these organizations generate.